



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PROFESSOR ROYCE AND THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIANITY

BY THE REV. JOHN T. DRISCOLL

IN a recent work, *The Problem of Christianity*, Professor Royce makes an attempt to set forth a philosophy of Christianity which is based upon human experience and is in essential harmony with the teaching of philosophical idealism developed in his Gifford Lectures, *The World and the Individual*. In the Preface he states that these views have been gradually maturing since 1908, when he published *The Philosophy of Loyalty* and find expression in the Bross Lectures of 1912 on *The Sources of Religious Thought*. A review of his philosophical idealism expounded in *The World and the Individual* is contained in a former treatise on "Christian Philosophy." My purpose now is to criticize his attempt to apply this idealism to the Problem of Christianity wherein he discusses the Christian Doctrine of Life with the avowed purpose of setting forth the Essence of the Christian Religion.

THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIANITY

To Professor Royce the Problem of Christianity arises from the relation of Christianity to the mind of to-day. The question he proposes to discuss is "in what way, if in any, can the modern man consistently be, in creed, a Christian?" The two terms of the comparison are clearly stated—viz., Christianity and the modern man. The means of the comparison are twofold: to state in empirical terms certain aspects of Christian Social experience and to defend these aspects in the light of a re-examination of certain fundamental metaphysical ideas. Thus three terms enter into the discussion: the modern man, a metaphysical theory, Christianity.

To Professor Royce the modern man is a postulate and is "one who is supposed to teach what the education of the human race has taught him." "This postulate," he continues, "includes a doctrine that the human race, taken as a whole, has some genuine and significant spiritual unity, so that its life includes a growth in genuine insight," and adds that this doctrine contains "the implication that in light of common insight gradually attained by the whole race, our creed should be tested and, if needs be, revised." The inference drawn from these words is that the teaching of the modern man is true. Yet in fact we inherit the follies as well as the wisdom of the ages. What criterion is here presented to guide me between the truth and error of the past? Or to guide Professor Royce in disagreeing with traditional Christianity? Why should it be taken for granted that a discussion of the Problem of Christianity means the revision of Christianity up to the mental state of the modern man? Does not a suspicion enter the mind that the modern man might be revised up to the teaching of Christianity? The term, modern man, therefore is a fiction. Or it may be a modest way by which Professor Royce designates himself. Yet we are told that the test of a scientific discovery is the consensus of opinion, and that philosophers of to-day "do not agree regarding any one philosophical opinion." Even Professor Royce explains that these volumes are the exclusive result of his own study, that they contain a new interpretation of Christianity, and is at pains to point out how he differs from Hegel, James, Bergson, Professors MacIntosh and Sanday. May not the claim be made that they have inherited the wisdom of the ages? In truth, Professor Royce's doctrine is based on a postulate or assumption which can be maintained only by one who accepts his system of philosophical idealism.

Professor Royce admits that he faces the study of Christianity from the view-point of metaphysical idealism and that he applies the spirit of this idealism to the problems arising from the study. In this idealism are found no terms as "soul" or "mind." He admits "the self" or person and holds that it is constituted by conscious memory. The active element in the self is the "idea," which is a "volitional process" and is defined as "a plan of action." The ordinary Pragmatist—*i. e.*, Professor James—is concerned with the direct and immediate effect of the "idea-striv-

ing." Professor Royce regards the ultimate purpose or "goal" of the idea and terms himself an "absolute Pragmatist."

Professor Royce denies immediate perception of the self or other selves. He deprecates the controversy about "precept" and "concept," calls these "sterile," and bases his whole system on a new and integrating cognitive process which he calls interpretation—that is, the mediating between two ideas or processes by means of a third. Only by interpretation do we know the self, for self is not "a datum," but a life or process containing three elements: past, present, and future. Interpretation sums up past experience into present experience, sets for us our future task, and thus brings us into touch with the real world. The Real World is therefore the interpretation of our present experience, namely, Appearance, and the idea of the goal of experience, namely, Reality. By interpretation only do we know other selves and things. For they are only "appearances" of reality, "embodiments" of the idea, "signs" with a meaning. The reality, the idea, the meaning are attained by interpretation, and our interpretations are "signs" to be further interpreted. Thus experience shows that our life is a realm of signs and is made up of interpretations of signs. Metaphysics generalizes this doctrine and applies it to the world at large. Hence the world is a process of interpretation not in its wholeness at any one moment, but through an infinite series of acts whereby the present progressively interprets the past to the future, thus constituting the temporal order. Thus the universe is one vast cosmic process of humanity moving on to its goal where is attained an all-embracing unity of consciousness. "The absolute, the sole and supreme Reality," is the entire process which is essentially social as made up of many individual selves. The aim and result of the process is the Absolute Self, which Professor Royce calls "the ideal community (common self) of all mankind."

Between the individual self on its way to the goal are various "spiritual communities," that is, common or social selves, through which man has closest relations to the immeasurably vast cosmic process, which is conceived as a process of coherent social evolution. Unity of consciousness constitutes the individual self. In like manner a unity of consciousness—a common consciousness among many indi-

viduals—constitutes a community, namely, a common self. This unity of consciousness is based upon a common memory and a common ideal or hope among many individuals. As a social being, man lives in communities. The community has a sort of organic unity, a mind of its own, and behaves like a conscious unit or a “suprasensible being.” The notion of the community suggests to Professor Royce a solution of the philosophical problem of the Many and the One, and also gives occasion to unfold his fundamental religious doctrine of the Two Levels, that is, man the individual and man the community.

Assuming the principle that religion is the product of certain human needs, Professor Royce seeks the origin and teaching of Christianity in Christian experience, not in the individual religious experience of Professor James, but in “that form of social religious experience which, in ideal, the Apostle Paul viewed as the experience of the Church.” For religion is essentially social, in Professor Royce’s view, because of man’s essential relation to the social evolutive process of the cosmos. He holds that the human individual Jesus is not the founder of Christianity and denies that the problem of Christianity can be solved by views respecting the person of Jesus. For Christianity preaches salvation and salvation cannot come from an individual, but only from loyalty to a community of ideal purpose. Besides, historical evidence as to Christ’s teaching is insufficient. “Humanly speaking,” Jesus gave “the impetus” to the movement in preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, and humanly speaking this can be explained by “genius.” Hence the modern man can be a Christian without holding any definite views about the person of Christ. Nor can the Apostle Paul be considered the founder, for what he taught he learned from the religious experience of the Christian Church. Professor Royce holds that the Christian community was the human founder of Christianity, but has no hypothesis about the origin of the community through lack of historical evidence. Yet he maintains that we have “priceless information about the essence of Christianity of the Pauline Churches and their actual life.” The interpretation of the social religious experience of these churches reveals three ideas most characteristic of primitive Christianity—viz., the Community, the Lost State of the natural man, Atonement and Grace. The discussion of these ideas are Professor Royce’s

contribution to the Problem of Christianity on the basis of a Social Study of Christian Origins.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF LIFE

Professor Royce holds that the problem of Christianity is the Christian Doctrine of Life. He says that this can be considered in a twofold light; as the product of human evolution and the outcome of a long history, and as the product of the social experience of the Pauline Churches. In the former view it is "the problem of humanity"; in the latter "it has features distinctively Christian." Therefore, he maintains that the doctrine should be analyzed in its relation to the whole lesson of human history and in the light of a philosophical study of this history, in order to know what Christianity is and means in the religious history of the race.

The Christian Doctrine of Life is constituted by the Three Ideas. Professor Royce teaches that these ideas have "a basis in human nature," are "the expressions of universal human needs, independent of Christianity," are "the verifiable results of the higher social religious experience of mankind," "can be estimated and put into practice without presupposing any one view of God or of revelation," and are "religious, for they relate to the salvation of mankind." This aspect is their "human and empirical aspect," for they furnish "a purely human philosophy of loyalty" and yet "are based upon metaphysical truths whose significance is more than human" (Lect. VIII).

To Professor Royce the natural condition of man is a state of social chaos. Man is an animal living in communities. These communities exist in human history in countless different forms and grades "of which the visible and historical Church is one instance." From the communities he derives religion, language, civilization, and all his natural powers. Constant tension and conflicts exist between self, his fellows, and the social will, which produce consciousness of self; that is, conscience. The standard of the social will, namely, the *law* of St. Paul, is an attempt to bring about social harmony, but in reality creates new and more complex tensions by the application of social discipline. Through this social training our self-will is developed and ideals arise. The more cultivated the training, the stronger grows the self-will. The evil increases and the burden grows

heavier. The individual may obey (conduct), but he inwardly revolts (consciousness of conduct). As culture advances, the revolt (distraction of will) increases; for high social cultivation trains Individualism. Thus the individual is by nature subject to an overwhelming moral burden which springs from the *original sin* of social contentiousness, and is increased by social training and by personal guilt. His natural condition is one of sin, for the sinfulness belongs to the race in its corporate capacity and the social order breeds conscious sinners. No act of his can save him. Escape is not from this type of cultivation—that is, the *law*. Help (salvation, which is winning the true goal of life) must come from a source above his level—that is, the *spirit*, which rescues him and lifts him from his fallen state.

The higher source, whence salvation comes, is, according to Professor Royce, the Community. For communities tend to be organized into more composite communities of still higher grade, of vaster conscious unity. Through the community the individual is most closely related to the world process, shares its spirit and lives its life, a life of ever-increasing conscious unity. Apart from the spirit and life of the community, the individual is viewed as “morally detached” and in “a lost state.” Hence we read that the doctrine of the Community is “a doctrine about the being, nature, and manifestation of God.”

Here is unfolded Professor Royce’s doctrine about the two levels of human existence: man, the individual, on the level of *the flesh* and *the law*, and man, the community, on the level of the *spirit*. He holds that they are levels of mental human beings and differ as two grades of human life. The individual regards the community as higher, nobler, more powerful, more enduring than himself, and shows this practical faith by devoted loyalty to its interests. He no longer loves according to the *flesh*—that is, as a mere individual loves a mere individual—but according to the *spirit*, and this love is loyalty. To him loyalty becomes the solution of the problem of personal life. The loyal “are, in ideal, essentially kin,” in them all is “a spirit essentially one,” and as loyalty begets loyalty, the logical development of the loyal spirit is “the rise of the consciousness of the ideal of a universal community of the loyal.” Hence the higher of the two levels is essentially, endlessly, and divinely above the individual level, and to act as a member of such a

community is to win what religion calls salvation. This loyalty, namely, thorough-going devotion to a cause which unites many selves in one, appeals to the individual by fixing attention on a life incomparably vaster than his own, and belongs to no one time, country, or people. Hence experience shows that salvation for man lies in the purely human philosophy of loyalty and loyalty is a religion, for it creates a new type of consciousness—love for the Community—and thus effects a spiritual transformation in the individual.

The "Lost State" includes not only the "morally detached" individual—that is, one who has not found his ideal community, but also the individual who, having found it, has lost it by proving false to the ideal—a traitor. Is there any reconciliation between him and his community, his moral world? Not on the part of the traitor; his deed cannot be undone and by it he belongs to the "Hell of the Irrevocable." But atonement can be given the community through heroic deeds performed on his behalf by some faithful servant in whom the very spirit of the community is incarnated. Treason's lost causes have proved to be opportunities for humanity's most triumphant loyalty. It is a human triumph of the creative spirit of humanity that could not undo the treason, but, through skill and ingenuity, effected the heroic act which transformed the meaning of the treason and made the world better by a transfiguration of loss into gain. In illustration, Professor Royce cites the story of Joseph and his brethren, where Joseph is the symbol for the spirit of the family and the result of the atoning act is a more perfect family unity. Through atonement the traitor enters into a saving union with the community, for his act of treason, now transfigured, is part of the community life. Hence atonement is the function in which the life of the community culminates. It teaches that in due time loyal love will oppose its atoning deeds to treason's sin. Professor Royce holds that Christianity expressed this teaching in the symbolic form of a report concerning the supernatural work of Christ, and humanity must express it through the devotion, genius, skill, labor of its loyal servants in whom its spirit is incarnated. The teaching and the symbol, he adds, "are two sides of the same life—at once human and divine."

The doctrine of the two levels arising from the study of human experience is, according to Professor Royce, the

doctrine out of which the whole of Christianity grows. For Christianity, he tells us, was founded on the idea of a Community, whose spirit or life was the spirit or life of its risen Lord, held as a present possession by an ideal common memory of a past event, "the rising of Jesus to the realm of the spirit," and by an ideal common hope of a future event, when, according to the Apostle, "we should rise with him" to the spirit, with love enlivening and completing both memory and hope. This belief, he says, grew out of the Master's teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven. Professor Royce holds that, historically speaking, Christianity never appeared as the religion taught by the Master, but as an interpretation of his teaching, going beyond it, and this was due to the presence of the founder's spirit. The enlargement of doctrine is shown especially, he says, in the fact that the Master, like other religious leaders in the world's history, emphasized God and our neighbor only. Whereas the Apostle Paul introduced a third being, a corporate Entity, "the Body of Christ," which he claims to be "a new revelation" discovered in his experience of an Apostle as the product of the life of the Christian Community itself and due to "the spirit of his Lord." To Paul the Church was "the very presence of his Lord," at once "a fact of present experience and a divine creation," hence "a mystery," "whose origin was wholly miraculous." Professor Royce holds that this belief "constitutes a new beginning in the evolution of Christianity. The Master had laid stress on the value of individual life, but St. Paul, as also Professor Royce, holds individuality to be the source of all our sin and woe. Only by ceasing to be a mere individual, through love for the Body of Christ, can one be saved. Thus the neighbor is transfigured as a member of the Beloved Community. We love him not as an individual—this the Master taught, but as a member of this Divine Community which, in ideal, is one conscious unity of all mankind. The spirit of the "risen Lord," which is the life of the Body, through love becomes our own. Hence love is loyalty and loyalty is Christian faith and Christian faith is grace and grace is the mystery of the incarnation in another form. Thus salvation comes through loyalty, for loyalty involves "an essentially new type of consciousness"—that is, "the consciousness of one who loves the community as a person."

Professor Royce holds that the Master's teaching concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, which the Apostle presented in a new revelation as the Body of Christ, "developed into the conception which the historic Church formed of its own mission, but says that the true Church is "one endlessly and conscious human spirit, whose life is to be lived on its own level"; hence invisible and still to be created by a process of evolution.

Therefore, according to Professor Royce, an examination into the Christian Doctrine of Life shows (1) how the Spirit, the Community, the process of Salvation, are genuine realities transcending any of their human embodiments; (2) that Christianity is the most effective expression of religious loyalty which the human race has, in its corporate capacity, expressed; (3) that the rock upon which the true and ideal church is built is the doctrine that the Community, wherein dwells the divine redeeming spirit, is, through loyalty, the source of salvation.

THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

The aim and result of the work under discussion is to point out what is vital in Christianity, so that the modern man may know what to hold and be a Christian. Professor Royce gives the solution of the problem by way of an illustration. Let us suppose the case of a young, highly educated, Greek philosopher who became a convert of the Pauline Church and, after living the life of an earnest Christian, at length dies. He comes to life in due time, is carefully instructed in our art, history, philosophy, and then is brought face to face with Christianity as it now exists. How, asks the Professor, can he, astonished and saddened at the essential changes which have taken place, retain his Christian faith? And answers:

"The one thing he must hold fast is the Pauline Doctrine of the presence of the redeeming divine spirit in the living church. This is the essence of Christianity in the Pauline Churches and in all the subsequent ages of Christian development. Thus he will keep in touch with historical Christianity—His church will neither be the official church nor the sect—His test of the church will be simply this, that it actually unifies all mankind and makes them one in the divine spirit. All else in Paul's teaching he may come to regard as symbol or as legend. This is the essence of the faith of the Apostles."

This solution sounds strange coming from such a source.

Professor Royce's volumes are a treatise in religious Social Psychology. A fundamental principle of this Psychology is "that religion springs from our conscious needs" and he expressly states that "the religious needs of the modern man are different from any ever before experienced and still greater changes will come in the near future" (I. 387). Why not then give the redivivus young Greek a course in religious Social Psychology and prepare him not only to accept a changed Christianity, but to *look with suspicion* upon a Christianity that has not changed? Again Professor Royce teaches that the "person" or "self" is not "a datum," but a "life" or "a process" and implies the description to the individual self, the social self, and the absolute self, of which the world-process is the expression. The social or common self—that is, the Community—is the basic idea in his treatise and has a marvelous richness of possible expansion without any limitation or interruption so far as the nature of the common self is concerned. Now both experience and science tell that growth or development is a law of life. On this doctrine of the self, I ask why does Professor Royce think that his young friend should be surprised or that he should regard the Pauline community as "a datum" or a fixture and not as "a life" or "a process"? In the emergency the simple and consistent course for the author is, not to forget his own philosophy, but to give a clear exposition of his theory of knowledge and of metaphysical idealism to his perplexed friend. Moreover, Professor Royce holds that interpretation is the ruling category of mental life and of the world-process, and that it is of the nature of interpretation to create something new. Hence our mental life, our code of morality, everything about us, change at each succeeding moment, as also does the conscious time-stream change. He applies this principle to the Pauline community and says that this being, the Body of Christ, first discovered the three ideas constituting the Christian Doctrine of Life in the effort to interpret the Master's teaching, that these ideas were a "new revelation" and "a new beginning in the evolution of Christianity," and that, furthermore, the dogmas of the Trinity and of the Incarnation were only symbols whereby the Pauline consciousness attempted to set forth the relation between the Absolute, the Spirit of the Pauline community, and the human founder Jesus. Now the young man should be aware

of this. The reader will be forced to conclude that the Greek was totally ignorant both of Professor Royce's philosophy and of the evolutive life of the Pauline Churches as he has described this life.

In presenting a symbolic interpretation of Christianity, Professor Royce is influenced by his theory of knowledge, which exhibits the "idea" as a conscious ideal-striving and by his metaphysical idealism which considers the universe as an ideal evolution of one endlessly creative and conscious human spirit. This evolutive spirit he calls the Universal or the Beloved Community, namely, the whole common consciousness of mankind. This is the one reality; all else are figures or symbols—partial embodiments of the reality. Hence God is a symbol for the community as a whole. The historical Church is a partial embodiment and the ideal Church is another name for the community. The ideas making up the Christian Doctrine of Life, the parables of Jesus, the dogmas of the Church are symbols of the evolution process in whole or in part. The human individual Jesus is the incarnation of the Spirit or life of humanity, just as the Christian Church is the incarnation of the Spirit of Jesus, and as we ourselves are the incarnations of humanity's spirit or life, when, through loyalty, we become one with this life or, through heroic deeds, we atone for humanity's wrongs. Hence Professor Royce questions the historical truth of the Gospels and holds that the life of Jesus was "the object of many legendary reports so framed that they include a symbolism whereby a portion of the *true faith* is expressed."

This explanation is not new. He proposes for our acceptance the mythical theory of Strauss written not as a historian nor as a theologian, but as a disciple of Hegel's Idealism. Strauss viewed the Hegelian process in its subjective aspect, sought the basic truths of Christianity in the early Christian consciousness, regarded Christ of the New Testament as the outcome of this consciousness, and held that legendary reports and embellishments were merely symbols for spiritual ideas. But the theory was too fanciful, could not withstand the comparison of the truthful matter-of-fact character of the New Testament writings with the Apocrypha and was rejected by scholars. In *Old and New Faith* 1870 Strauss confessed to disappointment at the outcome of his labors.

CRITICISM

Professor Royce writes that he has "approached this study" not as a historian, nor as a theologian, but as a philosopher." Therefore the criticism regards him as a philosopher only.

To him the Community is the fundamental notion in the religious history of the race and in Christianity. The community is the *common* self and, he says, is constituted by a common consciousness. Thus the definition of the community is based upon the definition of the Self. He holds that the Self is constituted by conscious memory. Hence the individual is a self because he possesses a present unity of conscious memory ideally extended to the future. But the teaching that consciousness constitutes the Self is an error in philosophy coming down from Locke and Kant. Conscious memory *makes me aware of* my personal identity and *presupposes* it. Memory or loss of memory does not change *me* or what *I* did. Forgetfulness, aphasia, dementia, delirium, sleep, do not change the person or self, but produce different *states* of the same Self. Hence a distinction should be made between *Self* and the *states* of the Self. Hence the notion of Professor Royce's Community is radically erroneous.

Again, in describing the natural state of man, he adopts the teaching of Hobbes and Spencer. But in fact this teaching is only a *philosophical theory* and *not proved*. Rousseau and his followers hold the peaceful state of the natural man. This opinion is a *philosophical theory* also, and *not proved*. Therefore upon a philosophical theory not proved and not universally accepted by anthropologists he bases his doctrine of the origin of the community. What becomes of his criterion that the consensus of opinion is necessary for a scientific hypothesis?

From the notion of the Community springs Professor Royce's doctrine of the Two Levels, which he claims to be the fundamental principle in religious history and in Christianity. Now in fact the careful reader distinguishes *three* levels—viz., the individual, the community actually existing, and the ideal community, namely, of ideal purpose. He draws on some current Sociological Psychology to show that actual communities have a mental and ethical unity of their own which makes them appear to the individual as "Suprapersonal beings." He leaves the reader to imply

that all this applies to *ideal* communities. But this implication is not at all clear. True, actual communities may not be made up of soul-mates or affinities, but they have a moral unity, or, to use the author's thought, a unity constituted by the spirit. Why then could not the individual find "his fulfilment and moral destiny" in devoted loyalty to actual communities? Furthermore, this current Sociological Psychology is based on the definition of the Self, which was shown to be erroneous, and regards man as an animal progressively evolving a human nature—another philosophical theory not by any means proved.

The fundamental error of Professor Royce is his teaching concerning the nature of man and of mental life. In denying immediate perception he falls into phenomenal idealism which develops into a metaphysical idealism where *idea*, *spirit*, *humanity* are regarded as the only realities. But as a matter of fact these are only *Personifications*. He does not seem to be aware that notion, judgment, and reasoning are fundamental elements in our mental life. Finally he defines the "idea" in terms of will. But this is contrary to the testimony of consciousness. That intellect and will are different is an elemental fact of conscious experience. The intellect is the cognitive mode or form of our conscious life; whereas the will is the source of motive power. A psychologist would be no more justified in combining intellect and will than would be a physiologist in blending the afferent and efferent nerves in one act. Moreover, these faculties are unequal in the individual. Intellect and will are called modes in which our soul-life is manifested. Hence, though distinct from each other, they are not separated in the sense that they are two entities, but unite in a unity by virtue of the spiritual principle—viz., the soul, whose modes of activity they are.

This is the aim of the present article: to point out that the most noteworthy publication of the year on the Philosophy of Religion, carefully constructed and written in beautiful language with a wealth of illustration, is, in the last analysis, based upon an erroneous definition of the "idea"—the most fundamental and apparently the simplest element in mental life.

JOHN T. DRISCOLL.